

MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION
4340 EAST-WEST HIGHWAY, ROOM 905
BETHESDA, MD 20814

23 February 2005

Ms. Cathy Liss, President
Animal Welfare Institute
P.O. Box 3650
Washington, D.C. 20027-0150

Dear Ms. Liss:

Thank you for your recent letter on the relationship between the Marine Mammal Commission's Advisory Committee on Acoustic Impacts on Marine Mammals and the National Marine Fisheries Service's efforts to develop new acoustic exposure criteria. The Marine Mammal Commission has been trying to foster productive discussions among stakeholders involved in the issue of anthropogenic ocean noise and its effects on marine mammals. Our Advisory Committee, established under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, includes members representing a wide diversity of positions and interests. We appreciate the Animal Welfare Institute's efforts to attend the Advisory Committee's meetings and comment during the public comment sessions.

The Commission has been in contact with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with regard to its development of acoustic exposure criteria with the assistance of an expert panel. NMFS and the panel presented their work on the criteria at the second plenary meeting of the Advisory Committee in April 2004. We expect that the panel will publish its findings as a peer-reviewed journal article. Also, as you know, NMFS has begun an environmental impact statement (EIS) process to gather public input about how it can use the panel's findings to refine its management approach. Interested members of the Advisory Committee are commenting directly to NMFS through the EIS process, and have expressed a variety of opinions about the exposure criteria and their possible use by NMFS.

The Advisory Committee as a whole has not determined whether it will address the expert panel's findings in any way. The Advisory Committee's final report will be a consensus-based document, and negotiations about its content are ongoing.

The Marine Mammal Commission will continue to consult with NMFS and participate as it sees fit on matters related to the development of acoustic exposure criteria and other aspects of marine mammal management. Thank you for your continued concern and participation. We have forwarded a copy of your letter and this response to all members and alternates of the Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Cottingham", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Cottingham
Executive Director